



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S UEBERMENSCH.

PHILOSOPHY in its narrow sense has come to-day to comprehend a great deal. It embraces not only the sciences that the university world considers, to which the last generation has added physiological psychology, but also such speculative results as transcend the circumscribed bounds of human knowledge and constitute systems whose purpose it is to satisfy the needs of a manifold human life. The investigations of the former may have enduring worth, as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, or Lotze's *Metaphysics*; the latter, however, are wholly dependent on the *Zeitgeist*. When the latter meet the demands of the age that gives them birth, they immediately find an enthusiastic reception, and the fame of their promulgator reaches the remotest ends of the earth. Think of Hegel in the thirties and forties. However, just as soon as the character of the age changes, the new world-deliverer who appeared to bring humanity the light of salvation sinks into oblivion, and the deepest problems that fill the human breast remain in insoluble darkness. Every great world-movement in the philosophy of life is followed with the regularity of nature itself by an opposing movement. Hegel gave way to Schopenhauer, and Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, whose philosophy may be considered the dominant philosophy of the last decade of the new German Empire.

In the fifties, when a period of political tyranny resulting from the revolutionary movement of 1848 oppressed Germany, and the people lapsed into a state of hopeless despondency, the pessimism of Schopenhauer, which had thus far been ignored, was welcomed in almost every German home. By many the question whether life

was worth living was answered with an emphatic negative. Germany lent an attentive ear to the words of the great Frankfort prophet, who belittled existence and praised non-existence as the only happy condition. "Why this farce of life," he asked, "which on a small scale is a comedy and on a large scale a tragedy?"

However, the character of the age changed. As a result of the glorious victory over France, the despondency of the national mind was dissipated, and the consciousness of the individual regained its supremacy. The new German Empire sprang into existence, and in all fields of human endeavor there was a marvellous awakening. Is it any wonder that under conditions so radically altered an apostle of negation could no longer obtain a hearing? The Germans had gained the courage to affirm life, and looked hopefully into the future. The new German Empire demanded a philosophy which extolled this world, teaching that it was a place where the highest development might be attained. The intellectual giant Nietzsche, with his wonderful power of intuition discerning the needs of his age, an age characterised by restless, nervous, unceasing activity, affirmed life to the negation of all else. He advocated that the individual should be true to self, that is, should sacrifice the world on the altar of self. The non-ego must serve the ego, and the ego should dare to have no restraints.

Friedrich Nietzsche, son of a minister, was born in 1844 near Naumburg, a little city in the Prussian province of Saxony. The distinguished father died when his son was quite young, thus leaving the latter to develop in the freest manner under the tender influences of a loving mother and an affectionate sister. He was a marvellously precocious child. The work of his boyhood days was prophetic of the great rôle he was to play in the philosophy of the new German Empire. He himself tells us that when only thirteen years old he took hold of the problem of evil. "In an age," he says, "when thoughts on childhood's diversions and the Architect of the universe alternate in the undeveloped intellect, I dedicated to this problem my first literary effort, my first philosophical essay. If you would know my solution of this problem, I will own that I gave God the honor of making him Father of evil." When only

twenty-four he became professor of classical philology in Basel, a Swiss university. However, his work had been and was still to be greatly interrupted by poor health. He many times suffered excruciating pain in his eyes and head, and was finally compelled to withdraw temporarily from the university. He went to Sorrento, a health resort, in the hope of finding there a cure; however, he was disappointed. Often the supremest wish of his life was that death might come and give him a speedy release from his torment. Instead of sparing his intensely nervous nature that it might have a chance to recuperate, he resigned himself entirely to the developing of his ideas: he worked incessantly. Even during the progress of the Franco-Prussian war, the unparalleled enthusiasm and jubilation of his victorious people left him absolutely unmoved in the retiracy of his Alpine home, where he sat buried in his meditations on the fascinating problems of Greek and Roman culture.

In 1874 he was obliged to resign his professorship. His health had grown so much worse that he was incapacitated from performing the duties which his chair imposed upon him. Still, even in the most trying moments of his suffering, something spurred and goaded him to reveal that which a long time had lain fermenting in the depths of his fiery intellect. He, the incurable invalid, who endured pain as few have been compelled to suffer, became so intoxicated by the beautiful dreams of his fervid imagination that he grew almost oblivious of his bodily torment. His phantasy held before him in perfected form the ideal of a more highly developed, superior man, the *Uebermensch*, whom in the 'Eighties he introduced with subtle and irresistible eloquence to the world.

In his books, particularly *Morgenröte* (1881), *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883-84), *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), *Götzendämmerung* (1889), he infused his fiery soul, coined his life's blood. "Of all that has been written," he says, "only that is worth while which has been written with blood. Write with blood, and you will realise that blood is spirit." He created a language of his own, over whose powers he wielded uncontrolled dominion. His words, which are winged with inspiration, reveal not only the sparkle and

heat, but also the fire of a great personality. "They rival painting in rendering nature, and music in reproducing sound." His style is characterised by idiomatic beauty, refined delicacy, epigrammatic sparkle, and subtle eloquence; it is the incarnation of his mighty individuality. Thoughts crowded irresistibly on his fertile mind, which in the first fire of inspiration, directly after they had arranged themselves, he put into tangible form. However, this flood of thoughts, the product of an overworked intellect, finally undermined the philosopher's nervous system. In 1889 the catastrophe came. The incurable invalid lost his mind, and had to be taken to the Jena insane asylum.

It was largely hatred of decadent humanity, with its low aims and ideals, that led Nietzsche to portray a higher type of man. He gives a picture of our present age that borders on caricature, an age which he claims fosters only degenerate human beings and destroys in their incipency all movements that give promise of greatness. There is a complete absence of individuals, we are told, that have the ability to dominate the masses. Everywhere we find only the average man, *das zahme Haustier, ein Stück Heerdenvieh*, who has no will of his own, but is submissive to the great majority. Everywhere exist proletarian instincts, which render the development of a really superior nature an impossibility.

"Bad air, bad air," exclaims our philosopher with emphasis. In bad air only herd instincts can exist; all strong and healthful instincts are destroyed. Consigned by birth to surroundings which mean degeneration and death, we are greatly handicapped; but there is no reason why we should not strive to create a new environment, wherein we might breath the pure air of a higher and fuller life. Unfortunately, our cowardly consciences forbid our doing this. We suffer from satiety, weariness of self, and grow sick because of the imbecility of our wills: all the result of cowardly consciences. Disease of conscience, the greatest and most lamentable affection from which humanity has never recovered, deprives us of the courage to affirm life joyously and of the power to act nobly. It is the radical evil of our civilisation, whose infected atmosphere sees only proletarian instincts thrive. Those who might

develop into superior men suppress higher instincts, do the will of the majority, and are contented if in the course of a lifetime they gain, as a result of careful management, a good pastureland, on which they may graze in peace during their last days.

To rid ourselves of the faults of our modern culture, Nietzsche proposes to do nothing less than to create a new system of morals : there shall be an *Umwertung aller Werte*. A great, strong, superior man shall take the place of the world's *fin-de-siècle* imbecile. Time was when the decadent weaklings of to-day quickly succumbed in the struggle of existence, and when our false system of morals had no significance. Nietzsche refers to the civilisations of Greece and Rome, which represent the realisation of his ideals. It was first Nietzsche's intention to resurrect the Greek and Roman worlds, and on them, as a basis, to establish a new culture, a sort of second Renaissance. Among the Greeks and Romans the ideas conveyed by the words "good" and "evil," morally considered, were quite different from those of to-day. That was good which was strong, healthy, powerful, arbitrary, selfish, cruel : such one had to be to be a master, a high type of man. That was evil which was weak, sickly, humble, miserable, unhappy : such was the slave, the low type of man. Nietzsche admired particularly the old Romans because they said to the world, "The will of Rome be done," and it was done. Here genuine greatness was to be found ; here was to be found the proper way of regarding things.

However, the slaves of the ancient world revolted, overcame the masters whom they had feared, and a directly opposite system of morals came into existence : Christianity succeeded Heathenism. It was an awful insurrection in the moral world, an insurrection in which the instincts of the weak triumphed over the instincts of the strong. Through Christianity the slaves took the most fearful revenge on their masters. The whole moral world assumed another aspect. All ethical notions grew to be different from what they had been under the rule of the masters. Good meant only that which arose from weakness : fear, humility, self-denial. These became the virtues of the new system of morals. All that before had been considered good was, according to the new code of morals,

considered evil, and *vice versa*. Thus the world became filled with despair. All consciousness of joy was suppressed. The Christian doctrines gained dominancy. To the weak, life was a burden, and they sought consolation in anticipation of future happiness. Existence they considered naught : in itself it meant nothing ; it needed another and better life to make it complete. Those who were promised the haven of rest, the joys of a more perfect world, were the weak. The strong would have difficulty in gaining entrance. The result was that the virtues arising from weakness were sought and considered the end of human endeavor. On the other hand, the virtues arising from strength were suppressed, and the tame *Haustier* man was bred. During the Renaissance the lofty ideals of life cherished by the ancient Greeks and Romans again showed signs of gaining realisation ; but with the democratic movement of the Reformation the vulgar instincts and impulses of the masses gained the upper hand. The Revolution also was a genuine plebeian movement, which saw the triumph of proletarianism. Of the few men of modern times whom Nietzsche would call really great, Napoleon is the most perfect representative of the *Ueberschensch*.

Nietzsche hates Christianity, with its odor of plebeianism, with its prayerful and penitential atmosphere, with its hypocritical air of humility and self-abnegation, all of which are an indication of weakness. He calls the religion of the humble Nazarene the greatest example of counterfeiting the world has produced. Its system, based on love, is the direct cause of the degeneration of the strong and the elevation of the weak. Christianity, as well as every other system of belief and morals that savors of proletarianism, must be overcome. The weak must perish because they hinder the development and delay the coming of the *Ueberschensch*. Instead of slave morals we must have master morals ; instead of the rule of the many, the rule of the few ; instead of a high proletariat and low aristocracy, a low proletariat and high aristocracy. Let the masses sink as low as they will ; the classes must be highly bred. Occasionally there arises from the quagmire of plebeianism a Napoleon, whose will becomes the will of his age. To tell the truth, though, it is always a very fortunate combination of circum-

stances which produces such ideal types, because the world's theory of life is so hopelessly low. When, however, the morals which Nietzsche advocates become humanity's rule of life, then such god-like mortals will constitute the regnant minority.

The *Uebermensch* of Nietzsche is a full-blooded, highly-bred man, with sound and healthful instincts and impulses, which he obeys absolutely, regardless of everything—a man who allows none of the instincts and impulses which nature has given him to degenerate. The development of a regnant will, which shall never be thwarted, and which is the basis of the *Uebermensch's* whole being, is the high purpose of this magnificent specimen of the genus *homo*. All of the activities of the intellect are only manifestations of the regnant will. The great philosophies of every age have had only one endeavor, and that is, having made the world a product of thought, to place it into the hands of the will to be moulded. The history of philosophy is the history of the intellect translating itself into the forms of volition.

The *Uebermensch* recognises no higher power than himself, be it God or man. He obeys only the dictates of his own nature, does only his own regnant will. There is no God, he says. Belief in a God he declares to be a delusion. If a God exist, so his inner nature tells him, it is a being capable of limitless pleasure. Only the weak consider the voice of conscience the voice of a higher power. The *Uebermensch* acts just like a child: he never asks, Shall I do this or shall I do that? but he obeys the dictates of his inner nature and does his regnant will. No code of morals binds him. What are the codes of morals that exist among the civilised nations of the earth? Simply the habits and customs of the great masses. And what, pray, are the habits and customs of the world's proletariat compared with the instincts and impulses of the *Uebermensch's* superior mind? The fact is, no existing code of morals could possibly bind the *Uebermensch*, because he is *jenseits von Gut und Böse* in the common acceptation of these words. However, he gives good and evil other meanings. Good is to him that which serves life and the regnant will; evil is that which hinders life in its highest development and prevents the free action of the regnant will.

Only when a man obeys the dictates of his inner nature and does his regnant will may his actions be denominated good in the morals of the *Ueberschensch*. The *Ueberschensch* makes his will regnant against a world of opposition. He loves conflict because it awakens and strengthens his powers. Pity is to him an unknown feeling. If he were to exercise pity, it would be a sign of weakness, degeneration. All the great civilisations of the past saw in pity an element of weakness.

To the extermination of whatever stands in the way of the *Ueberschensch*, Nietzsche lends a moral sanction. Thus the *Ueberschensch* is a sort of beast of prey: he sees in life nothing more, or little more, than appropriating, robbing, overcoming, destroying. In a word, the *Ueberschensch* is a sovereign individual, who, possessed of boundless power, sacrifices the world on the altar of self. Christ sought to deny self, and sacrificed self that others might live; the *Ueberschensch* seeks to elevate self and to sacrifice others. Christ sought peace; the *Ueberschensch* seeks strife. He is supremely happy when he can rise on the dead and wounded bodies of the weak; this strengthens his feeling of cruelty. Christ despised this life, because it is only a probationary period, and reward follows. The *Ueberschensch* honors this life because he knows no other; to him it may be the means of the highest development, the source of the greatest pleasure.

This is Nietzscheism. To understand how Germany could produce so great an anarchist in the world of thought, one must know the Germany of the new German Empire. The influence of Nietzsche, the most popular thinker of the present generation, is simply phenomenal, far greater than that of any other widely known world-deliverer since the days of Schopenhauer. In the whole modern international literature echo the resounding notes of the new philosophy of life. Even Ibsen, who must be considered the greatest realist of this age, is a poetic promulgator of many of Nietzsche's teachings. Among others, four things have worked most potently in creating for Nietzsche a school of votaries who see in their teacher a new world-deliverer: these are the charm of

his style, the beauty of his thought, the greatness of his message, and the magic of his personality.

The right of the individual to obey absolutely all the instincts and impulses of his nature, to make his will regnant, whatever oppose it, to free himself from the habits and customs of our decadent age, to exalt self and the few who can rise, and degrade the many who must succumb that the few may rise the higher,—this is Nietzscheism, these are the claims of the *fin-de-siècle* world, to which Nietzsche has given the most lucid, concise, and powerful expression. Therefore, he who will know the *Zeitgeist* must know Nietzsche, of whom Richard Wagner said: “*O Freund! Genau genommen, sind Sie, nach meiner Frau, der einzige Gewinn, den mir das Leben zugeführt.*”

PYRMONT, GERMANY.
GERMANTOWN, O.

HEINRICH GOEBEL.
ERNEST ANTRIM.